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C O N F I D E N T I A L JAKARTA 015147

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [ID](#)
SUBJECT: FORMER PRESIDENT MEGAWATI CRITICIZES YUDHOYONO'S
PERFORMANCE

REF: A. JAKARTA 12416 (OPPOSITION GROUP)
[1](#)B. JAKARTA 2378 (MEGAWATI WORRIES ABOUT ISLAMISTS)

Classified By: Political Officer David R. Greenberg, reason: 1.4 (d).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) In a November 18 meeting with the Ambassador, former President Megawati Soekarnoputri played the part of opposition leader to the hilt, expressing dismay with the performance of the current administration and President Yudhoyono's reliance on Islamist political parties. Megawati downplayed the importance of her participation in a group of leading disempowered political figures, but said she would guard her party's status as an alternative to the status quo. She worried about implementation of the Aceh peace accord and recommended restructuring of Indonesia's national election process. Megawati, whose immediate observation after a case of dengue fever of her husband, Taufik Kiemas, might require three more months to recover fully from health problems. End Summary.

RECOVERING FROM DENGUE

[1](#)2. (C) Receiving the Ambassador at her Teuku Umar residence, former President Megawati appeared relaxed and in a good mood despite her relatively recent discharge from the hospital. She confirmed press reports that she had suffered from dengue fever and said she remained under observation. She attributed the illness to her travels around Indonesia, as she sought to consolidate affairs within her Indonesian Democratic Party - Struggle (PDI-P). Megawati said conditions within PDI-P had improved, especially on the Central Board, thanks in part to the efforts of party Secretary General Pramono Anung.

[1](#)3. (C) Megawati said her husband, Taufik Kiemas, also hospitalized in October, might need another three months to recuperate from heart problems. (Note: According to our contacts, Taufik, although now discharged from the hospital, suffers from a grave condition and might not fully recover. Press reports indicate he needed treatment for heart disease, although one contact stated he showed signs of an impending stroke when he checked into the hospital. End Note.)

DISAPPOINTED WITH ADMINISTRATION'S PERFORMANCE

[1](#)4. (C) The Ambassador remarked on the recent success of the police in tracking down Jemaah Islamiyah bombmaker Azahari Bin Husin. He reviewed the Embassy's continuing concerns about terrorism in Indonesia. Speaking in the most general terms, Megawati reported her disappointment with the performance of President Yudhoyono. She said that the current situation appeared worse than during her term in office. Cabinet Ministers seemed more partisan than before, and the government had become generally less effective.

YUDHOYONO'S WEAKNESS

15. (C) Yudhoyono's poor performance appeared tied to his weak political base, Megawati said. She noted Yudhoyono received little effective support from his own Democratic Party, whose Chairman, Hadi Utomo, lacked political vision. She worried that Yudhoyono, despite his own nationalist (read: secular) tendencies, seemed overly reliant on Islamist parties, particularly the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS). PKS appeared to have momentum, while the more inclusive National Mandate Party (PAN) appeared in decline, since former PAN Chairman Amien Rais' grip on the party had weakened.

16. (C) Megawati estimated that Golkar had moved toward the Islamist side of Indonesia's political spectrum ever since former House of Representatives (DPR) Chairman Akbar Tandjung lost the party chairmanship. Megawati said Golkar's shift reflected current party Chairman Jusuf Kalla's leanings. A recent reshuffle of commission leadership positions in the DPR had displaced Akbar's allies, empowered Kalla loyalists, and provided opportunities to politicians with an Islamist inclination. (Comment: Allegations of Golkar becoming "greener" precede Kalla's chairmanship. Previously, critics complained that Akbar Tandjung imparted more of an Islamic tinge to the party. End Comment.) These personnel changes in the DPR also increased internal friction within Golkar, Megawati observed.

ACEH

17. (C) The Ambassador raised PDI-P's opposition to the Aceh peace accord, noting the USG strongly supported resolution of the conflict. Megawati claimed that the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) surrender of weapons had proceeded more slowly than it should. She said she heard conditions in Aceh did not appear as hopeful as the peace accord might imply. She worried in particular that both the GAM and the GOI would experience internal problems as they tried to live up to the agreement. (Comment: We disagree with the assessment that GAM's surrender of weapons has lagged expectations and see Megawati's antipathy toward the Yudhoyono administration coloring her perception of the accord and manifesting itself in her vague critique. End Comment.)

OPPOSITION

18. (C) The Ambassador requested Megawati's perspective on the role of an informal grouping of prominent politicians (herself, Abdurrahman Wahid, Akbar Tandjung, Wiranto, and Try Sutrisno -- ref A). Megawati said this group sought to receive information on developments in Indonesia and would make public statements in order to improve the government's functioning. Noting that only she and Wahid led political parties, Megawati said she often felt that PDI-P occupied a lonely position in the DPR because Wahid's National Awakening Party (PKB) seemed susceptible to influence from Yudhoyono's sympathizers. Megawati said, nevertheless, that PDI-P should remain as an alternative to the current administration, seemingly confirming press reports that she rejected offers to put allies into a reshuffled cabinet.

ELECTORAL SYSTEM

19. (C) Reflecting on the 2004 election, Megawati complained that the process had proven overly drawn out, rendering her ineffective for the last eight months of her term. The election required an enormous logistical effort to ensure the distribution of instructions and materials throughout the archipelago, and protecting presidential candidates represented a significant burden for the GOI. Looking ahead, Megawati said the DPR should revise the legal framework so that the next presidential election took place before the legislative election. She said PDI-P would propose this in

the DPR.

COMMENT

¶10. (C) Despite her recent case of dengue, Megawati appeared more relaxed and confident than in her last meeting with the Ambassador (ref B). She might have good reason: PDI-P has turned in a stronger performance than its rivals in Indonesia's local elections, winning three of seven gubernatorial races and outpacing Golkar at the city/regency level. Megawati also likely takes pleasure in seeing Yudhoyono come under pressure from political parties jockeying for cabinet seats, knowing that the President can neither keep his supporters in suspense indefinitely nor devise a reshuffle formula that will satisfy all of them. Although Megawati has taken note of PKS's impressive growth, that party's pragmatic support for the current administration leaves PDI-P as the most appealing alternative to the status quo -- a good position to hold, as Megawati learned the hard way in 2004.

PASCOE